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PHILOSOPHY OF CAREER SERVICE

It is my intent in this paper to underline some of the points which seem important to me as we now work toward the goal of developing the best possible Staff and, concomitantly, of achieving the most efficient organization to carry out our missions. Before I make these points, however, I should like to clarify my view of the relationship between Career Service and Personnel Administration.

It seems to me that Career Service is a means of bringing about a good system of administering personnel, that it is an adjunct of personnel administration and not a system apart. Effective personnel administration is a chief goal in any organization and the philosophy of good management holds that through such a system we can best stimulate esprit and high morale among employees. This I firmly believe, and in this context, Career Service becomes a way of grouping and organizing our people so that those goals and benefits which are of mutual interest can better be realized. Present day size and complexity of organizations have created management problems almost undreamed not very many years ago. Career Service seems to me to be a way of assuring the individual that despite the hundreds of other employees about him, his case will be considered and his ambitions taken into account. His share of the bargain thus becomes the execution of his job to the best of his ability.

By implication, then, Career Service is not a special benefits program nor is it the society for the favored few. This is not to say that there will not be individuals who are selected above others for greater responsibility and for greater benefits. There most certainly will be but these responsibilities and benefits must come out of the system, and not be used as symbols for entrance into the society. The men and women with reputations among their superiors and contemporaries for doing consistently outstanding jobs are eligible for - and belong to - that elite corps in any organization. They are also usually known and it is quite unnecessary to publish their names on the organization bulletin board.

In these terms, then, I should like to state four approaches I think we must emphasize in further improving our personnel administration and our Career Service.

I. We Must Place a Heavy Emphasis on Line Management.

Any large organization needs to be supported with staffs, task forces, and other mechanisms set up for purposes of planning, coordinating, or monitoring, but what must constantly be kept in mind is that the true energy and power of an organization comes through command channels. These channels must be kept strong and well defined and to this end I suggest that each manager consider these four requirements on him to assure more effective line organization:

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fluidity of organization we must maintain, even to individual jobs, in order to respond to constantly varying requirements. The second is the wide variation of requirements in this agency between jobs where absolute conformity is required and those where maximum creativity is desired. Both of these needs put a special requirement on all supervisors and managers to frequently evaluate subordinate positions and to be able to define clearly at all times not only the obvious basic requirements for the immediate jobs under them but also the subtler requirements of attitudes and understandings.

In addition to these aspects of position requirements there is another balance each manager must endeavor to maintain - the balance between the requirements of a given position and the capabilities of the people available for it. This kind of managerial judgment and decision is uniquely important in our agency because of the frequency of personnel changes in some of our jobs. Study of the successes and failures of individuals whom each of us has assigned to jobs is probably the best way to develop our own guide lines for assignments we will make in the future. It requires a clear understanding not only of the job requirements, but of the specific strengths and weaknesses of each individual involved. Organization charts are relatively meaningless without careful consideration of the people, as individuals, who sit in the various boxes on the chart. Organization lines also become darker, dimmer, dotted or even disappear altogether depending on the individuals who occupy the various key positions in the structure.

B. Clear communications of the main objective (s) in each job.

Here I am emphasizing particularly the substance of a given job as opposed to skills or procedures or manners of approach. I am talking about that kind of delegation which requires a supervisor to sit down with a subordinate and come to an agreement about the major job achievements expected from him over a given length of time. Sometimes these goals can be very specific, sometimes they cannot. In the latter instance, it is even more important that mutual understanding exist between boss and subordinate. But the most important requirement in this situation is that the subordinate is held responsible and accountable for such delegations to the maximum degree possible. Only in this way can we be assured that we have the right people in the right jobs and that we are developing a real cadre of capable officers.

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- C. Increased time devoted to training and developing all individuals. One of the greatest contributions a supervisor can make to an organization is his competent development of personnel for larger future responsibilities. This coaching process requires time in schedules that are already full, but I believe the results are worth whatever efforts this takes. It includes, I think, frequent contacts, adequate guidance, constructive criticism, candor, and above all, praise when it is deserved. It involves a sense of timing as to when a particular experience is necessary for the growth of an individual and the sometimes more difficult task of trying to see that he gets it. Though I believe that true development is self-development, I believe that it is the responsibility of line management to create the environment and climate for this.

If the coaching of an individual is adequately carried out, appraisal of him has been automatically communicated to him in the most effective way possible. However, the needs for judging between individuals from time to time, and the competition for promotions or other "rewards," make the appraisal tools important too. Increasingly our fitness reports are scrutinized and relied on for a considerable share of the review of an individual's performance and the estimate of his potential. It would seem appropriate to give increased attention to improving the quality of these written evaluations.

- D. More careful selection and training of supervisors and managers. It follows naturally from the above that selection of those in supervisory and managerial positions will have to be made carefully if we are to have individuals who can carry out these requirements. Since no effective tests have so far been devised to predict the capable supervisor or manager, I see no better way to critically evaluate and select a man or woman for these positions than by observing closely the work of an individual and the personal relations involved, by candidly talking with the individual about such observations, by offering what assistance is needed, and by taking time for sufficient follow-up on these preliminary steps to be sure the conclusion was accurate. This organization still suffers from having people in supervisory or managerial positions who are not desirous of being there and who are not qualified for the responsibility. Particular care in the selection and training of individuals for these positions should minimize the problem in the future. Any supervisor who does not have as one of his principal objectives the training and preparation of juniors to assume the key positions of his organization, including his own, is not doing his job.

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II. There is more good to be gained from striving for intangible benefits through good personnel administration than from emphasizing the procurement of tangible benefits.

The Career Service has by no means been a failure, and several important accomplishments of these past years must be at least partially attributed to this system. It has been gratifying to me to note the vote of confidence given by all the DD/S Office Heads and by other components as well to the achievements of our personnel program. Competitive promotion, selection out, retirement when eligible with full annuity, the JOT Program - these are means we have used and are using to bring about the best use of our people. The new Personnel Development Board will be another important step in the development of our system, I think - a step we needed for the essential implementation of career plans for those individuals with capabilities to assure responsibilities cutting across organizational lines. Perhaps the greatest single benefit has been the evolution of a clearer understanding of the role of the Personnel Director or of the Personnel Officers generally in relation to the line managers and the heads of Career Service. Personnel Officers have the responsibility to lead in the establishment of policy, systems, etc. In the final analysis, however, their function is one of service and assistance. The line manager or head of Career Service is the true manager of his personnel in this Agency as he is in fact in any organization, and I believe our Career Service program has done much to bring line management to face up to its responsibilities. It can and should do more.

Some of our learning about personnel administration in the past five years has come as a result of our mistakes. In the introduction to the Career Service the overemphasis on tangible benefits seems to me to have been one of our real errors. It was an unintentionally false lure on the part of the Agency and an unfortunately false goal for the members of the Career Service. Realistic and reasonable benefits will evolve naturally, I believe, as a result of improved and seasoned personnel practices and when conferred in the proper context - i.e., recognized accomplishment in reference to stipulated Agency needs - will be accepted by all.

Much has been written in the past ten years on the subject of motivation and many ideas have been advanced about the best ways to develop and utilize this power. What it boils down to, however, is individual satisfaction on the job -- a man's feeling of belonging in his part of the organization and a belief that his talents are being properly utilized. In addition to this, each employee wants to know that as his membership in the organization continues he will be given a fair chance at whatever opportunities and rewards are available. In this context I look upon special training, challenging assignments, and special recognition as rewards, along with promotions and in-grade raises.

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I firmly believe that some of the intangibles are of greater significance than the monetary rewards--though I by no means minimize the importance of monetary and other tangible benefits.

III. Nevertheless, some tangible benefits would be valuable and effort should be made to obtain those which are feasible.

Though, as I have stated, the total consideration of the problem convinces me that these are of less importance than those deriving from job satisfactions, still I feel we should attempt to obtain those benefits which are reasonable and justifiable. This will require study and planning, and a great deal of spade work may be necessary before such benefits can be realized. Through our controlled staffing program we are assuring ourselves that there will be spaces for advancement for the most capable; benefits in addition to this (e.g., possible early retirement with full annuity) will have to be granted on the basis of documented evidence of accomplishment, not promised on the basis of intent or willingness. In many of our present efforts we are building and preparing our case for the Congressional approval which will ultimately be needed.

IV. There is need for a realistic appreciation of rotation.

Another error we made in introducing the Career Service program was giving the impression that nearly everybody would or could be rotated as a part of his career development. Though it is likely that by now the misconception has been generally corrected, a clear enunciation of a more practical approach to rotation may be necessary. Here I think we must take into account the various widths of capability. Some employees will benefit most from crossing lines within their own Career Service, i.e. within Logistics, Personnel, etc. others will have the abilities enabling them to be rotated within their major component, i.e. within DD/S, DD/P, or DD/I; and a few will be ear-marked for broader development by rotation between major components. The responsibility for this determination will have to be made by the joint efforts of individual Career Services, the new Personnel Development Board, and Deputy Directors, and although there will be times when a good man is taken from us - perhaps permanently--and times when those we receive seem less good than the ones we "gave," still the need for this kind of planning is obvious and we must assure its accomplishment.

It seems to me fair to say that perhaps 90% of all employees within a given career service will serve out their careers in that service. Most finance officers in the Comptroller's Office for instance, are likely to find their professional satisfaction and their chances to make the greatest contribution right in the Budget and Finance Career Service--for as long as they may remain in the Agency.

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Perhaps no more than 5 - 10% of these will wind up in other DD/S Career Services and an even smaller percentage can look forward to careers outside the DD/S. A similar analysis for any other DD/S Career Service, with the possible exception of Training, will bring you to the quick conclusion that prospects there for rotation to other Career Services are no brighter. If these estimates are reasonable, then rotation among Career Services for the masses becomes ridiculous and extremely inefficient, both for the individuals and for the Agency.

If, then, the vast majority of employees will find their developmental rotations within their own career service, how can we best identify and plan for the 2 - 3% who have the interest and potential for very broad responsibilities in the future? As I indicated above, this will have to be through the joint efforts of the Personnel Development Board, the Heads of Career Services and probably the Deputy Directors. Perhaps at the outset these lateral transfers of capable young men and women can be achieved by the use of a quota system, small and informally agreed upon to begin with, to be tried and tested prior to being formalized at some future date. This would seem to me to be a responsibility of the new Board, and I suggest also that a study be made of the proper timing of such rotations in a person's career to give guidance to senior managers throughout the Agency.

Many of the views expressed here are editorializings on familiar points, but I am in hopes that they may prove helpful at this time of re-study and clarification of our Career Service. As the Director of Personnel has pointed out in his response to the Inspector General's Survey, some of the current major personnel problems in the Agency are lodged within different components, and each problem needs to be approached separately and each requires action tailored to the specific problem. If we agree generally, however, on our main objectives and on the philosophy with which we will proceed toward those goals, the lack of uniformity in our approaches does not seem to me to pose an insurmountable problem. As is true with all efforts to make any system more efficient, there will be a combination of current practices, of modifications and of new procedures. This pragmatic approach has much in its favor.